

STRATEGIC PLANNING IN INTERMEDIATE CITIES OF THE ARGENTINIAN NORTHEAST

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ABSTRACT. Intermediate cities in Argentina have been the ones which had the most population growth during the last thirty years, as a result of social and economic changes. This situation has transformed traditional processes of territory occupation especially in the cities of North East region. Thus, the strong urban sprawl process these cities are suffering entails a number of issues related with lack of proper planning policies.

This paper summarized different planning projects applied to middle sized cities by The Planning Institute (IPUR) from Faculty of Architecture (UNNE) which has been developed over years to address urban growth and managed to achieve sustainable development. The chosen projects could be an example of smart initiatives to tackle issues of cities in similar situation.

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INTRODUCTION

In the frame of a series of extension programs which are promoted for the Northeast National University, to be developed by its professors and researchers and with the participation of advanced students, at the Urban and Regional Planning Institute some experiences at NEA localities were carried out, especially approaching the urban problem.

The program “University in the community” promotes the development of extension projects with the participation of the State in its different jurisdictions and the actors of community, focused on varied problems in a specific territory. Through the celebration of “Interinstitutional agreements” it also promotes the intervention of professional professors and researchers of UNNE, from other disciplines, in the approaching of studies and projects applicable to different problematic.

We present in this opportunity two examples referred to these participation modalities: The cases of the city of Presidencia Roque Sáenz Peña (University in the community) and the city of Paso de los Libres (Interinstitutional Agreement), both characterized as intermediate cities of the region, and with the opportunity to capitalize local conditions and in order to position themselves competitively starting from an appropriate planning.

INTERMEDIATE CITIES

Only the delimitation of a city taking into account its dimensions and the population quantity it is not enough to characterize an intermediate city, even when these data are associated with the urban functioning and the

size depends on the geographic place in the world we are referring to.

It is common, to applied qualitative criteria (Ballet Bellet, 2000, Bellet y Llop, 2004) to identified cities and their territories, focusing on their role and position among local, urban and rural territories of its influence area in comparison with other urban centers and, is related with goods and services flow, as well as information, innovation, administration, among other topics.

Its role and position among the local territories, urban and rural of its influence area and other regional and national centers are important, because they have to do with goods and services flow, as well as information, innovation, administration, among other topics.

These cities form a net or a relations system in which the intermediate and small ones acquire protagonism becoming economic exchange centers that bring on its development and of its rural areas as well as the socio-cultural interaction, impacting the rural and urban traditional relation way.

Its scale gives a higher possibility to carry on a long range of sustainable territorial development projects, in addition to improve its functioning of services and infrastructure for rural zones. This is relevant because one of the aspects that have impacted on intermediate cities, unlike earlier stages, it is the agricultural modernization. (BELLET & LLOP, 2004).

Country migrations actually do not ahead only to big cities and the metropoli, because they can't get into its dynamics, and can't ensure stable jobs, so they tend to relocate in small or medium cities which allow them to keep the

connecting link to agricultural activities, so in this way there is a higher population mobility between minor urban centers.

Different authors and studies show that inside the human settlement system the most dynamic sector in demographic terms is the intermediate cities, which would state and important change of reversion of the traditional polarization to a more equilibrated structure of the urban system, although it would result more efficient and sustainable to plan its development in a stable and ordered way.

Beyond current difficulties, to identified middle sized cities in terms of population and rank, in argentine examples, resulted on scarcity of updated information, approaches and policies, shown little concern from government and, make difficult to analyze their nature of function, interfering in proper design of intervention plans.

Intermediate cities in Argentina and NEA

The broad Argentinian territory -2.780.092 Km²- has a population that overcomes the forty billions of people. It presents important inequalities in a regional level, both in socioeconomic aspects and the distribution of the cities in the space.

During the XX century an accelerated and uncontrolled urbanization process was carried out with the reduction of the rural population, specially the youth.

The national urban system forms a centralized and radio centralized scheme, with regional non-consolidated sub-systems and almost no relations among them, with no continuity between hierarchies of urban centers, which implicates a strong imbalance in some regions.

There is a marked preponderance of the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Region which concentrates more than a third of the total population of the country and the 50% of the industrial jobs, and the Humid Prairie where the other third of the population is located.

The Argentinian Northeast System counts with three regional nodes and an organization of

the scheme of settlements marked for the fluvial axes of Paraná-Paraguay and Uruguay rivers, along with the principal national roads.

Some settlements stand out, and they are distributed with some regularity in agricultural areas, like the Cotton area of Chaco, where Presidencia Roque Saenz Peña city is, and the node of international articulation among which is Paso de los Libres city in the Province of Corrientes.



Figure 1. Argentinian Urban System: Territorial Strategic Plan, 2011.

The argentinian Northeast region (NEA) in which UNNE is located and the cities that we present in this paper is formed by Corrientes, Misiones, Chaco y Formosa provinces. It limits with the countries of Uruguay, Paraguay and Brasil. It has a surface of 290.000km² and it has a population of almost 3,7 millions, which represents approximately the 10% of the total population of the country. It presents high percentages of young population, above the national average and differentiated productive structures that share a pattern of original specialization in Argentina.

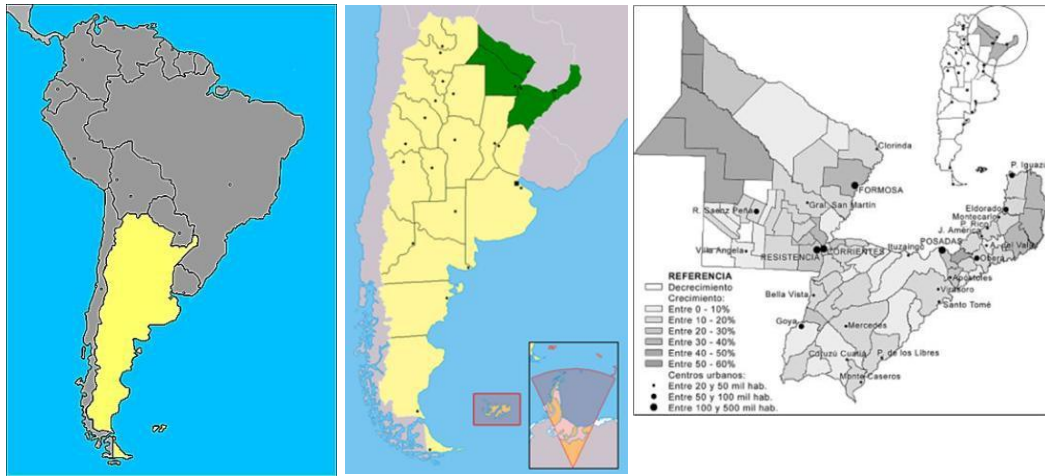


Figure 2, 3 and 4. Location of the Northeast region in Argentina and South America.

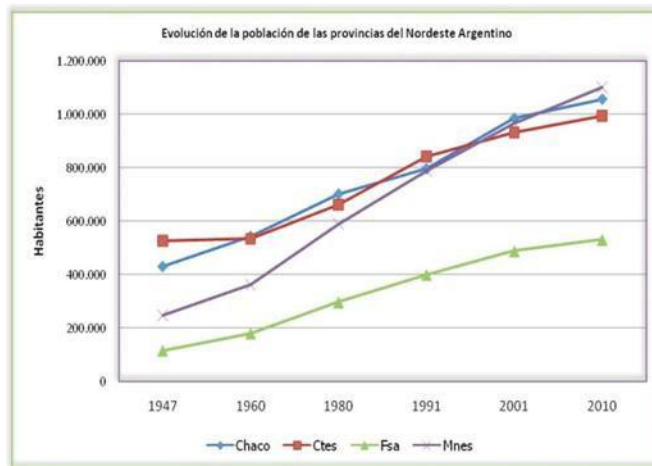


Figure 5. Evolution of Provinces populations if the Argentinian Northeast
Source: Population National Censuses, 1947, 1960, 1980, 1991, 2011, and 2010.

Its demographic volumen moderately increased between 1960 and 2010, doubling in that period. Population is concentrated in provinces capitals, located around the fluvial axes of Paraná river (Resistencia, Corrientes and Posadas) and the Paraguay river (Formosa).

Traditionally, the region characterized by its agricultural productive specializations has complemented this activity with the setting up of associated industries, promoting the development of industrial parks, located in the main cities.

However, the process faces the reality of being one the regions with more needs of infrastructure and equipment inversions: pipelines, railroads, provinces bridges, aqueducts, among others, which would allow the enlargement of productive areas and the improvement of the population life quality.

An important regional potential is its strategic location in the Northeast in the continental corridors scheme: MERCOSUR axis-Chile, Capricornio axis, Paraná-Paraguay watercourse and the bioceanic Railroad corridor Paranaguá-Antofagasta.

The region has strengthened during the last past years its touristic potential and besides the traditional places Cataratas del Iguazú-Iguazú Falls(Misiones), opportunities of adventure tourism at the Impenetrable Chaqueño (Chaco) or at Esteros del Iberá (Corrientes) and National Parks are of a high environmental interest.

From this environmental point of view, NEA presents three well differentiated sub systems: A semiarid occidental fringe with xeric forests; a central one with parks and dried savanna and an oriental humid one, dominated by tidelands, glens, and jungles rivera (shore or bank jungles). Urban centers usually locate along the rivers or the axis of roads and

railroads communication forming small ensembles.

Referred to the social-demographic aspects, Misiones, Formosa and Chaco provinces present high rates of vegetative growing, as well as the higher index of urban poverty. Some processes linked to management have affected the region, some were structural as well as global, since the changes of the global economic system in the last decades of the XX century, which have repercussions on the organization of the productive activities, like the MERCOSUR case, that at the same time modify the roles, relations and ways of communicating rather than the traditional ones.

All these modifications carry on inner changes in the country and regions, especially in the new roles that province and municipal governments had to face from administrative decentralization processes and transference of promoted services, with the promotion of local development struggling for the active participation of the different involved actors in defense of local interests and the promotion of strategic alliances. Agricultural sector was also transforming and suffered the migration of the rural population to the city, not only to the largest metropolitan areas, but to the median and small cities of every region.

PLANNING OF INTERMEDIATE CITIES. EXPERIENCES CARRIED ON BY THE IPUR, FAU-UNNE AT THE CITY OF PRESIDENCIA ROQUE SÁENZ PEÑA, CHACO PROVINCE AND PASO DE LOS LIBRES CITY, CORRIENTES PROVINCE

Presidencia Roque Sáenz Peña. Chaco province

It is the second most important city in Chaco province. Head of Comandante Fernández Department, it has a population of around 100.000 habitants, being one of the most populated cities of the region. It is located in the core of the central dome of the province, it is a rich zone in natural resources, and it has an important agricultural production. It forms the center of a sub system of urban settlements distributed with certain degree of rationality over the highest absolute and relative productivity areas named as Micro region N°17.

Even when presents a large dependence of the rural sector, It is a qualified commercial and services center of provincial and regional hierarchy, with an incipient industrial activity, enhanced to its central location and link-up with the 16 and 95 National roads that cross in the locality, in coincidence with the railroad axis which connect it from north to south with other provinces and the north of Chile.

The city have had a significant process of urbanization in the last decades which showed the limited answer response from the state to face the needs of social equipment and basic infrastructure, even when different environmental urban studies predicted the consequences of this process, contributing integral and alternative proposals tending to prewise the demands, specially of the most people in need sectors.

It is interesting to ascertain in the elaborated map for the study of the Urban system of Chaco Province, the way that this city predominates the location of urban centers and the agricultural and industrial development of the provincial central dome.

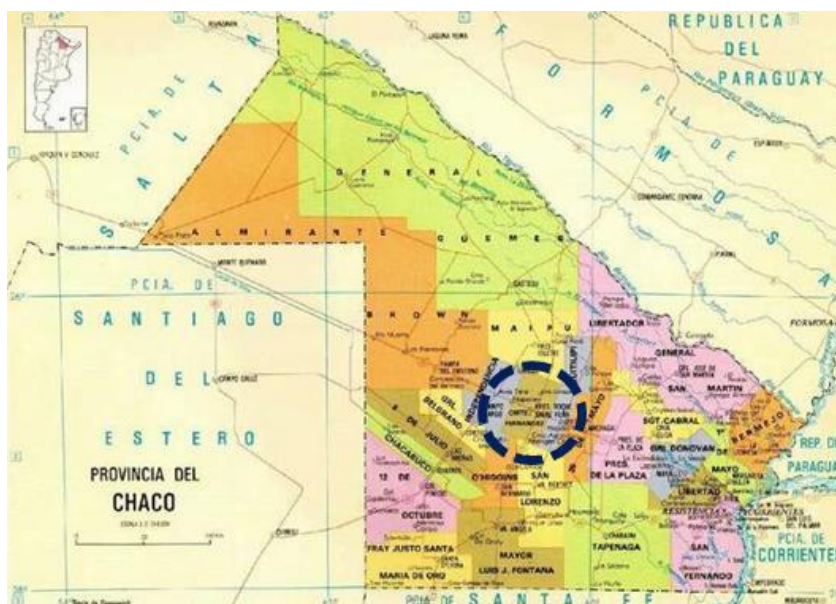


Figure 6. Presidencia Roque Saenz Peña in Chaco Provinces.

Paso de los Libres. Corrientes Province

It is the most important city of the southeast of the province. Head of Paso de los Libres Department. It has a population of 44.000 inhabitants, the higher one in that province region. Leads a group of small urban and rural settlements that are located in its own department jurisdiction. Taking into account the regional context it is located in such a way that the road network allows it to directly communicate with the most important cities in the inner of the province, and some significant cities of the country and to a neighboring country, like Uruguayana city, in Brazil and with all the MERCOSUR.

This important place as a border point turns it into one of the most dynamic axis of the population, goods and services, a transcendent economic system based on local commercial activity and exchange with Uruguayana city and its influence area, becoming the second customs of the country after Buenos Aires.

In this case the impact of urbanization also showed the lack of adequate responses of the State to solve the demands of social equipment and basic infrastructure, leading to serious environmental tensions, compounded for the high level of territorial fragmentation because of the presence of water courses, underused equipment, railroad infrastructure and others.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Starting from a deep investigation of backgrounds, current and trends state of the territorial issues of the cities in the context of their regions, we established some structural guidelines of planning and participative development as framework for the identification of programs and specific projects, and the formulation of normative, which lead and guarantee the concretion of the entrusted objectives, and to contribute to rationalize the use and occupation of the land, with the elaboration of the respective codes of Urban-Environmental Planning.

An important relevance had the activities oriented to the elaboration of a Social-economic and Urban-Environmental diagnosis, accomplished with the active participation of the community through personal interviews, surveys to relevant actors, workshops, and some other queries mechanisms and community participation. These activities allowed proposing the integral land use planning of the municipal territory and the formulation of structural projects for urban transformation and their influence areas, in both cases.

The survey of uses of the land allow to obtain a functional radiography of the localities.

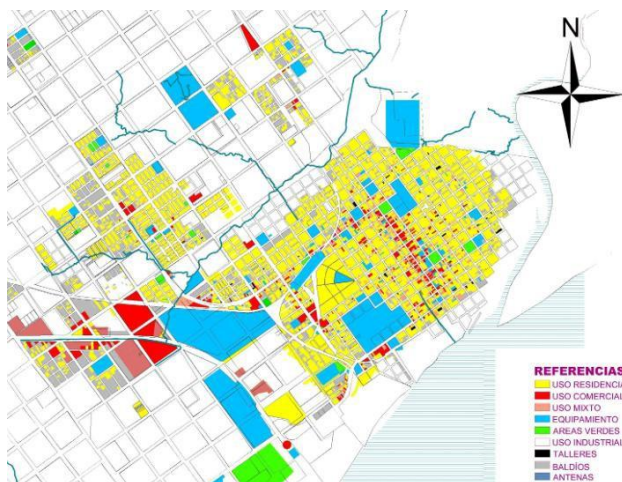


Figure 7: Urban land uses of Paso de Los Libres. Source: Own production, 2012.

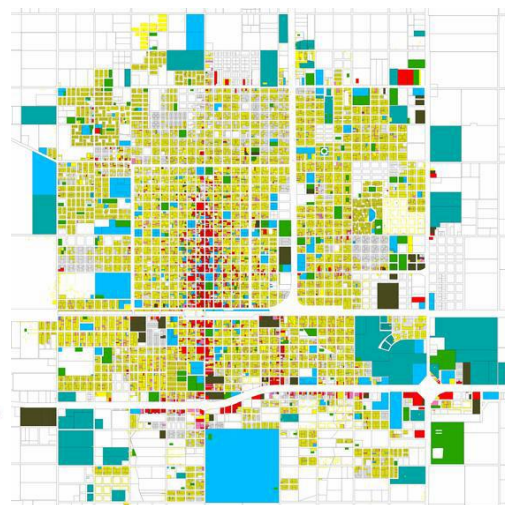


Figure 8: Urban land uses of P. R. Sáenz Peña. Source: Own production, 2008.

Expansion Stages

Taking into account the environment conditionings and the most significant architectural and urban barriers, we propose in each case possible stages of order expansion of the cities over basis that can guarantee more sustainability for activities and persons who live there.

Once they were defined and agreed for the municipality the stages to be implemented at the first instance, the most important recommendations showed the need to concentrate the efforts to promote its order occupation from a necessary coordination and previous agreements of plans execution, programs, and municipal provincial and national projects to converge in the territory in order to have it ready to hold up the new productive, logistics and services activities.



Figure 9: North expansion stage Figure 10: West expansion stage Figure 11: South expansion stage
 Expansion stages of Presidencia Roque Sáenz Peña, 2008. Source: own production.



- Esquema escenario de expansión 1**
- Zona baja que aporta al arroyo La Despedida
 - Vale de inundación arroyo La Despedida
 - Zona baja que aporta al arroyo Yatay
 - Zona baja que aporta al arroyo Uruguay y arroyo Yatay
 - Vale de inundación río Uruguay y arroyo Yatay
 - Areas de expansión de densificación a y b

- Esquema escenario de expansión 2**
- Areas de expansión noreste a y b
 - Zona baja que aporta al arroyo La Despedida
 - Vale de inundación arroyo La Despedida

- Esquema escenario de expansión 3**
- Basural actual
 - Vale de inundación río Uruguay y arroyo Yatay
 - Area de actividades de ruta
 - Areas de expansión sudoeste

Figure 12, 13, 14. Expansion stages of Paso de los Libres, 2012. Source: own production.

Strategies of Sustainable Development

Generate conditions of Urban Environmental Sustainability

All the proposed actions considered the current problems of the urban cores, its growth, vulnerable areas, rural areas, its entanglement with other centers and the exploitation of the natural landscape, especially in the case of Paso de los Libres for the higher impact due to its hydric sources.

Generate conditions of Social Economic Sustainability

All the actions in this line promotes the exploitation of their strategic locations and its

potential to face and strengthen the development of tertiary activities, logistics, industrial and the ones linked to the primary sector of production, which will rebound in social and economics improvements for the population in each city and region.

The definition of this strategies was accompanied of a broad and detailed identification of acting programs, feasible actions to be carried out in a short, medium and long term, with the corresponding assignment of resources, control plans and monitoring and the appropriate management instruments as it can be appreciated in some of the elaborated documents for the implementation of the projects and priority programs.



Figure 15. Examples of specific programs for P. R. Sáenz Peña. Source: own production.



Figure 16. Examples of specific programs for Paso de los Libres. Source: own production.

CONCLUSION

Experiences that were carried out at Presidencia Roque Sáez Peña (Chaco Province) and Paso de los Libres (Corrientes Province) takes us to ratify the idea that the planning of the intermediate cities are a great opportunity to capitalize their own conditions starting from local development strategies, becoming also in a supporting point to promote the necessary regional equilibrium in the northeast of Argentina.

Without a doubt local governments have to assume the leadership in the leading of territorial transformation processes and establish clear rules for the different agents involved, with the true objective of recovering the participation as a growing motor and improvement of the life quality, and also the legitimation of public policies in a sustainable process over the time.

In this way, we have advanced in a series of tools that allow to recognize, interpret and act in different approaching scales, through the formation of sustainable and strategic guidelines, plans, programs, and projects of local and regional interest, and a normative basis that establishes clear rules for all localities and other actions that contribute to form an holistic approach of the sustainable evolution of both settlements, and its territorial planning to a medium and long term.

This Works become an important data base, diagnosis, strategies, normatives and Geographic Information Systems which are a set of tools that will help to optimize the local management in order to achieve a balanced development of the localities and their respective regions, following the priorities its local government decide.

Besides, considers the application of a group of tracing indicators which will allow to effectively monitor the results of the faced strategies, because it is too premature to anticipate these results at the moment when the local governments are receiving the studies and they will have to check them, and by now they are in a complicated electoral process.

Thus, the importance of the University in the generation and technical support in the conformation of strategies for sustainable urban development has been shown. Furthermore, researcher's contributions in innovative initiatives in management, governability and sustainability applied to cities, especially in middle size examples located in NEA, must be highlighted.

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